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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHAA/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT IMMEDIATE 0027
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4051
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 9355
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 6251
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 4294
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3119
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 9852
RUEHNW/AMEMBASSY OSLO 3212
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM 0318
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2290
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 6803
RUEHBFI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 4669
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNCS/NSC WASHDC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1289

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 001324

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ASHGABAT -- PLEASE PASS TO PDAS STEVEN R. MANN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/14/2016

TAGS: PREL PTER PHUM CE

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: CLAYMORE EXPLOSION HITS PAKISTANI HIGH COMMISSIONER AND POLICE CONVOY FOLLOWING ASSASSINATION OF DEPUTY PEACE SECRETARY IN COLOMBO

REF: COLOMBO 1313 AND PREVIOUS

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Classified By: James R. Moore, Charge' d'Affaires for reasons 1.4(b,d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Two LTTE claymore mines planted in a three-wheeler exploded on a Security Task Force (STF) escort vehicle following the Pakistani High Commissioner's car on August 14 at approximately 1:20 PM. The blast occurred within 500 meters of the US embassy and killed seven, including four police Special Task Forces (STF) and three foreign nationals. The blast came two days after suspected Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) operatives murdered Peace Secretariat Deputy Kethesh Loganathan outside his home in Colombo. The LTTE continued to engage with the Sri Lanka security forces in operations on and near the Jaffna peninsula the evening of August 12 through August 14. Meanwhile, US-funded humanitarian deminers working in Jaffna have suspended operations and plan to depart Jaffna as security forces reinstated a 24-hour curfew. End summary.

Explosion Targets Police Vehicle

¶2. (C) At approximately 1:20 PM on August 14 two claymore bombs planted in the engine compartment of a three-wheeler exploded within 500 meters of the embassy, hitting a Security Task Force (STF) vehicle and slightly damaging that of the Pakistani High Commissioner, who sustained only minor injuries. As of this writing, seven were confirmed dead, including four Special Task Force members and three civilians. Fifteen wounded have reportedly been taken to the hospital. Pakistan is a major supplier of weapons to the Sri Lanka military.

¶3. (C) The August 14 claymore attack follows police officers' discovery in the Colombo suburb of Wattala on August 13 of explosives hidden in a truck bound for Colombo and of at

least two other such shipments in previous days. The suspects driving the truck swallowed cyanide capsules. One died, and the other admitted his involvement with the LTTE upon being rushed to the hospital, according to August 14 news reports. The explosives found include claymore mines, hand grenades, and remote control detonators, as well as ammunition and automatic weapons.

Tigers Murder SCOPP Deputy

¶ 14. (C) Deputy Secretary General of the Secretariat for the Coordination of the Peace Process (SCOPP) Ketesh Loganathan was shot dead at his residence in Colombo on the evening of August 12, apparently by the LTTE. President Rajapaksa called Loganathan's murder "another example of the LTTE's rejection of the path of peace and negotiation." A former member of the LTTE-rival Eelam People's Democratic Liberation Front, Loganathan was a part of the Tamil negotiating team at the 1985 Thimpu peace talks, a graduate of Georgetown University, a 1998-99 Humphrey Fellow, and a close contact of the U.S. mission in Colombo.

Rumors of Peace Talks

¶ 15. (C) Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) spokesperson Thor Omarsson told the press August 13 that the LTTE had unofficially told monitors the organization was still considering peace talks but that the SLMM "did not take it as a serious offer." LTTE Peace Secretariat head S. Puleedevan claimed the report was false, arguing to the SLMM that "Colombo is adamant to find a military solution to the conflict despite goodwill gestures by the LTTE," according to an August 14 pro-LTTE Tamilnet story. In an August 14

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interview with the independent Daily Mirror, SLMM chief Ulf Henricsson contended: "I recommended to Norway to consider withdrawing the SLMM because I can't see the need for its function when the parties don't want us. They just want us as a political cover. That's why they have not terminated the Cease Fire Agreement." A Norwegian diplomat told poloff August 13 that the SLMM would not remove monitors from Jaffna at this time.

Lull in Jaffna

¶ 16. (C) Military Sources informed DATT on August 13 that the LTTE attack on Jaffna appeared to hit a lull on the night of August 12 with the exception of attacks on Sri Lanka Navy (SLN)-dominated Kayts island and Kilali, on the western coast of the Forward Defense Line (FDL). DATT's sources reported no significant attacks near Trincomalee or Batticaloa in the east.

¶ 17. (C) On the evening of August 12 and the early morning of August 13, the LTTE launched boats against Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) ground forces on Kayts island to the west of Jaffna town, attempting to land cadres who could presumably launch an attack on Jaffna proper. Military sources confirmed to DATT August 14 that security forces had effectively repelled the LTTE attempt to occupy Kayts, but that ground fighting continued at the Forward Defense Line (FDL) toward Elephant Pass.

¶ 18. (C) At approximately 7 AM on August 14, the Sri Lanka Air Force bombed the town of Paranthan near the northeastern Sea Tiger base of Mulaitivu, midway between Elephant Pass (linking Jaffna and the Vanni) and Kilinochchi, a local BBC stringer told pol FSN on August 14. Pro-LTTE Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP for Jaffna, Gajen Ponnombalam, told pol FSN that 43 schoolgirls died and 60 were injured when a bomb landed on a children's home. DATT sources, however, claimed the target was a significant LTTE camp and that those killed

were child soldiers.

¶9. (C) NGO contacts in Jaffna told poloff via telephone August 14 that they were awoken by artillery fire that morning after a relatively quiet night. The National Security Media unit claimed LTTE cadres in Jaffna, Muttur, and Mavilaru had begun deserting their Army on August 12, and the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) would ensure the security of child soldiers who surrendered to security forces and police.

Expats Holding Out

¶10. (C) Security forces in Jaffna lifted the 24-hour curfew in place since August 12 on August 14 from 10 AM to 12 PM, but an NGO contact in Jaffna told poloff August 14 that civilians were out in the streets by 9 AM. By the afternoon, the window had closed again when security forces confiscated the curfew passes of RONCO and HALO deminers and instructed them to remain indoors for the next three to four days.

¶11. (C) Poloff spoke with the British, Australian and Canadian missions August 13 who expressed willingness to coordinate with the ICRC to request assistance for expatriates wishing to leave Jaffna. A British diplomat told poloff that LTTE rockets on August 11 damaged the Palaly Air Force Base in Jaffna, which also serves as the commercial runway, despite military assurances to the contrary, and commercial flights have been suspended since August 12. British Warden and HALO Trust program manager Stephen Pritchard briefed poloff later on August 13 on a meeting of all international NGO staff in Jaffna that afternoon.

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Forty-one expatriates representing ICRC, UNHCR, UNDP, HALO Trust, Danish Demining Group, and other agencies, agreed that all but the humanitarian deminers would prefer to remain in Jaffna until further notice. All of the expatriates ruled out evacuation by Sri Lanka Army (SLA) convoy or military helicopter citing security concerns.

¶12. (C) US-funded RONCO technical advisor, Australian Craig Crosby, and three US-funded HALO Trust employees (two British, one Kosovar-Albanian) have requested embassy assistance coordinating their departure from Jaffna as both RONCO and HALO have temporarily suspended humanitarian mine action activities and are concerned for their safety. The US citizen working in Jaffna under UNHCR confirmed to conoff again August 14 that he does not wish to leave. Pritchard reported August 14 that all NGOs in Jaffna are facing petroleum shortages that could hamper their transport and relief activities as long as the A9 highway remains closed. Poloff will meet with Australian High Commission poloff on August 15 to facilitate the demining agencies' formal request to ICRC for transport out of Jaffna.

Comment

¶13. (C) Comment: It appears likely that Sri Lanka military offensives against the LTTE will continue to escalate as the LTTE fights for a foothold in Jaffna following its failed operation on the Malivaru water sluice (reflets). An LTTE failure to capture a strong base on Jaffna peninsula could lead the Tigers to focus more attacks on Colombo and other parts of the country. End comment.

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